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Article Critique of Project

ANNEX "C"

Subject: Gesellschaft für Wehrkunde

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE/METHOD/EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
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A. Handicaps

1. The Gesellschaft für Wehrkunde had difficulties from the very start because (ex-General) Steiner was considered to be the leading GfW personality and also passed himself off as such. Although Steiner was truthfully regarded everywhere as sincerely anti-Communist, nevertheless the following factors were responsible for a widespread negative reaction on the part of large circles of the former Officer Corps.

a. Steiner transferred from the Army to the Waffen-SS in 1932 or 1933. This move was interpreted by his fellow officers as being an act of opportunism and not in accord with the old Prussian spirit of the Army officers. Although Steiner's enemies are mainly Army officers, these constitute the majority of the Officer Corps and they still adhere, for the most part, to the old Prussian concepts of honor and caste.

b. Steiner is generally considered a gifted soldier, but he is equally regarded as an untalented politician with vague, hazy, and partly romantic notions about the State and its functions. It was well known that Steiner had party-political ambitions.

c. It was widely known that Steiner sought and cultivated contacts with all occupation powers. Incidentally, he himself talked about his repeated conversations with representatives of the French occupation powers -- Francois Poncet and General Koening. There were rumors about contacts between Steiner and English officers. Both of these relationships brought him the reputation of being an opportunistic collaborator.

d. Steiner was held responsible for the mistaken political course of the DSZ (Deutsche Soldaten Zeitung) which was allegedly inspired by him. This especially caused Steiner to be rejected by the former General Staff officers. (Note: This refers to DSZ anti-Adenauer attacks which caused a flurry at the time; this editorial course was later changed to a more favorable attitude).

The reproaches against Steiner which adversely affected the expansion of the GfW were true only in part. Part of the growing resistance to him was due to the efforts of GfW Chairman von Hellermann, who stirred up personal antagonism through private conversations with members of the GfW sections.

2. A second source of internal mistrust was GfW Chairman (ex-General) von Hellermann himself. During the closing phases of the war he was head of the Army Personnel Office section for training future leaders, and is reported to have performed his duties in a very National Socialist manner. He was also regarded as a "weak personality" which, (in connection with the GfW) strengthened the impression that not he, but Steiner, was the actual Gesellschaft Chairman. However, the truth is that von Hellermann proved to be a worthy director of the GfW. He was the strongest motivating force against Communist infiltration, against the Communist-front "Leadership Ring" (of ex-officers) and against the GRP (outlawed radical rightist party) -- to say nothing of the fact that he neutralized the perennial out-of-turn political maneuvers of Steiner. Finally, it was also von Hellermann who established the present good GfW relations with Bonn (through von Borin).

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3. Internally, the GfW was troubled by two opposing factions. The first of these, represented by Steiner, aimed at transforming the GfW into an instrument of domestic politics tied to rightist opposition against Bonn (i.e., the Federal Government). The other faction, headed by the leader of the GfW Committee for Defense Propaganda (Classen himself) wanted to make the GfW an instrument of cold war guidance against Communism. The two factions never came to full agreement, and from time to time strife and discord broke out. Steiner tried to further the aims of his faction by attempting to closely link the GfW with the Ufa "Gesellschaft für Neue Staatspolitik", which arouses resistance from the governing Board of the GfW. The other faction sought to carry out its work by means of "Opinions" (GfW publication Wahrkunde for internal distribution) and through brochures by many different writers. In the event all support for the GfW ends, Steiner wants to transform the GfW into a branch of the Ufa group while at the same time he looks beyond the Ufa organization for some means of long term support.

4. From the beginning, the GfW was handicapped in that the editorship of "Opinions" was placed in the hands of Ruoff. Of course, Ruoff handled the editorial work very well. However, his Waffen-SS background again and again aroused suspicion that he intended -- in cooperation with Steiner -- to make a Waffen-SS undertaking out of the GfW. Objectively speaking, this supposition was not true. From the very beginning of the GfW, Steiner and Ruoff frequently had very stormy relations. The two men are completely opposite in nature and each has an entirely different conception of the political scene. Nevertheless, the suspicion spread that both were carrying on some sort of SS-conspiracy.

5. Another handicap to development of the GfW was the fact that from the very beginning it was rumored to be closely tied in with the Soldaten Zeitung. The fact that Steiner and Ruoff both were connected with the Schild Verlag (publishers of the DSZ), or to the editorial staff of the DSZ itself, was the basis for this rumor. Before the GfW was founded, it was known that the DSZ was financed by the Americans. Thus, Steiner's and Ruoff's presence as founding members of the GfW created the basis for implication that both the GfW and the DSZ were American-supported. The GfW dispelled this suspicion to some degree by maintaining that its support came from the Foundation for German Scientific Study (Stiftverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft). In any case, this seemed to eliminate suspicions in Bonn.

6. Propaganda operations of the GfW were somewhat restricted in that editorials had to be examined by the Americans and then were refused in part. The appropriateness and usefulness of editorial projects can only be judged by a fully trusted German personality familiar with the present psychological situation in the Federal Republic. As an example, reference is made to the drafts of the author Herbert Blank in Hamburg. They -- with the title "Europe will Do it" -- were turned down by the Americans. However, Blank's style and his selection of themes have quite a large audience in Germany. His brochure is the one with the best and most far-reaching response; repeat orders are coming from the press, youth groups, schools and political organizations as well as church groups.

The proposals in this country to reprint his old book "Soldaten" (after a small modification of text), would make a far-reaching inroad into the circles of the dilatory or infiltrated circles of former soldiers. The American objection that the book is too "Prussian" is untenable, considering that an up-to-date re-writing of the text was promised, and that the East Zone propaganda officials have always made use of the Prussian tradition as one of the most effective instruments for infiltration.

B. What to watch for in similar undertakings

1. There should be only one middleman between the American office and a rebuilt Apparat. In the establishment of the GfW, the following people knew about its connection with an American office:

Steiner, Demerou, Ferlebach, von Kalben, Frau Paulhaber,
Graf Schack, Dr. Riedweg, von Gilgenheimb, Graf Nostitz,
Solbunker, Blumentritt, Ruoff, Frau Ruoff, Prinz Burchard,
von Kleist, Röder, Spengler, Pfeiffer, Uhlig, Strasser,
Dr. Classen, Frau Riedweg.

This was impossible since secrecy was no longer implicitly guaranteed. A single person (not even two or three) must function as agent of the employer -- and this person must enjoy full confidence.

2. When an officer is selected as agent, then he should not be an officer of the Waffen-SS, an Army officer, or an Air Force officer; but if at all possible, should be a Navy officer. The Waffen-SS officers have not sufficient prestige with the other officers; the Army officers are steeped in the old Prussian ideas of caste; the Air Corps officers are generally not seriously concerned politically. Navy officers, in comparison, are considered worldly, up-to-date and more approachable than others of a Western orientation. It would be best to select a person who, generally, has not grown up and been educated in the prejudices of the former Officer Corps and who has as much weight as a personality on the other side that he would be acknowledged by the former officers as influential. Many difficulties would thereby be avoided from the beginning which result from the opposing personal, career-wise, political and traditional resentments of the German officers.

3. The financial source must be believably concealed. The undertaking is discredited with the knowledge of the German origin of the money and thereby loses the possibility of really being influential. The possibilities for a really unobjectionable concealment of the origin of funds are not many, however, the following points could be considered:

a. Establishment of an auditor or trust company which is acceptable to the German finance authorities, and which is in a legally authorized position to carry on these audit and control functions. This trust company could receive the money "in trusteeship" and use it ostensibly either on behalf of official or confidential accounts.

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b. Establishment of a scientific research institute whose generally useful character has been endorsed by financial authorities and which, therefore, is free from all official auditing.

c. Establishment of a German subsidiary of a foreign trade firm which, in the eyes of German finance authorities, can and is entitled to declare their money as publicity costs.

d. Internal agreement with a German political official.

There are no other means for an effective concealment of the origin of money under the present legislative arrangements in the Federal Republic.

4. In the agreement between the employer and the German agent, there must be absolute clarity on the goal of the undertaking. This clarity was not reached with the GfW. The latter alleges that he was instructed to create an instrument of domestic policy and at the same time to establish a kind of "black cadre" Army. Dr. Claussen said the GfW was to be an instrument of cold war guidance against the West. The development of the GfW has suffered under these opposing ideas. In establishments of this kind, there should not be this type of confusion.

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